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*The Colonial Merchants and the American Revolution, 1763-1776.*

By ARTHUR MEIER SCHLESINGER, Ph.D. [Columbia University Studies in History, Economics, and Public Law, vol. LXXVIII.] (New York: Longmans, Green, and Company. 1918. Pp. 647. \$4.00.)

IN his elaborate study of the colonial merchants and the American Revolution, Professor Schlesinger has made the most important original contribution to colonial history that we have had in a long time. His work is noteworthy not only for the light which it everywhere throws on the events of the pre-Revolutionary period, but also for its value as a model of creative research. He has taken up a subject which has for years been in lamentable need of an investigator; his treatment is of that scientific and thoroughgoing sort which is worth more than reams of speculation and popularization within the limits of knowledge already acquired; his range is wide—not one colony but all the colonies considered as a whole and comparatively; and his material is more than official records and the correspondence of statesmen, it consists in largest part of newspapers—a little-worked mine of the right kind of information—letter-books, diaries, pamphlets, and the hundred and one sources of minor details, which disclose the thoughts and activities of the average man and when pieced together suggest new and unexpected interpretations.

Professor Schlesinger has approached a very large and important task with energy, courage, and enthusiasm, and has handled the data which he has collected not only with insight and understanding but also with remarkable firmness, fairness, and dispassionate judgment. There is not a trace of patriotic piety in his pages. He does not hesitate to call a "patriot" an agitator and a radical or a scoundrel; if need be, to speak of him as one whose brains were often in his biceps, and to characterize his methods as frequently lawless and sometimes abominably unjust. Likewise, he is not deterred from saying that the Loyalists were high-minded, reasonable, and honorable gentlemen, as frequently was the case, nor from praising their attitude of conservatism and conciliation. He is true to his duty as an historian when he refuses to worship at the shrine of patriotism or to twist and warp the truth, however unpalatable that truth may be. It is an unhappy fact that more errors in the writing of American history have been committed in the name of patriotism than were ever dreamed of in Horatio's philosophy.

The story that Professor Schlesinger tells us is not the whole story of the years before the Revolution, but it is a very important part of that story and one that has hitherto been strangely ignored. It concerns the activities of the merchants who were engaged in trade and commerce, whose welfare was bound up with that of the mother-country, and whose prosperity was dependent on the continuance of business relations with their fellow-merchants in England. It concerns those whose desire was to obtain a redress of trade grievances by

legitimate and peaceful means, and not by political agitation or armed revolt. They were the moderates, a large and influential body, who labored long and successfully for peace, and by using non-intercourse as a weapon were able to swing majorities in Parliament and to stave off radical measures until the very eve of the Revolution. The tea question lured them to combine with the patriotic party which they had hitherto opposed, an alliance in which they were outwitted and outmatched by the superior political skill of the radical leaders, who in the First Continental Congress committed the country, without any mandate therefor, to an alignment of parties and a definition of policy. This was the result, often demonstrated in history, of the superior offensive and eventual victory of a small group of determined radicals, well organized and astutely led, over a larger but less articulated moderate element, upholding a cause that was probably favored by a majority of the colonial population.

What we now need is an equally thorough, honest, and impartial study of the radical movement itself, of Sam Adams and his fellow-agitators, and of the methods whereby the "patriots" committed the country to war. We also need some reinforcement and enlargement even of Professor Schlesinger's own account, along the line of trade grievances, of the working of the trade laws after 1763, and especially of the co-operative activities of the merchants in England and Scotland. Professor Schlesinger's handling of the tea question is one of the best of the many good things in his book, but we must know more about the money situation and about business conditions before final conclusions can be reached. As it is, however, what Professor Schlesinger has written will stand as a landmark in our progress toward a better understanding of the causes of the Revolution.

CHARLES M. ANDREWS.

*The West Florida Controversy, 1798-1813: a Study in American Diplomacy.* By ISAAC JOSLIN COX, Associate Professor of History, University of Cincinnati. [The Albert Shaw Lectures on Diplomatic History, 1912.] (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press. 1918. Pp. xii, 699. \$3.00.)

WEST FLORIDA was the district on the Gulf of Mexico extending from the Mississippi to the Perdido River, and was like the pin upon which are thrown the rings in the game of shuffleboard. It was a meeting-ground where overlapped the Spanish claim to Florida, the French claim to Louisiana, and the British claim inherited by Georgia to territory south of the Ohio River. The earlier part of the book discusses briefly but satisfactorily these overlapping claims, which made the east, or Mobile district, to Edward A. Freeman the most complicated historical puzzle in the world. And Mr. Freeman had made a specialty of the Balkan region! The centre of Dr. Cox's story is the Baton Rouge part of the district.